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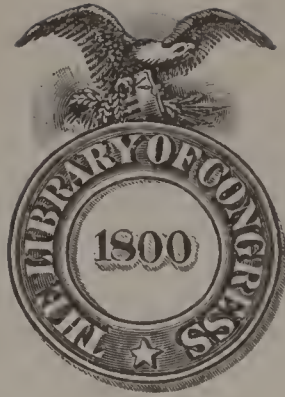
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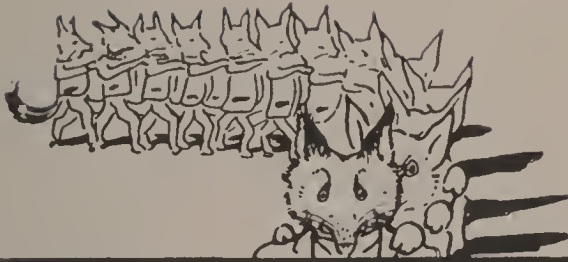
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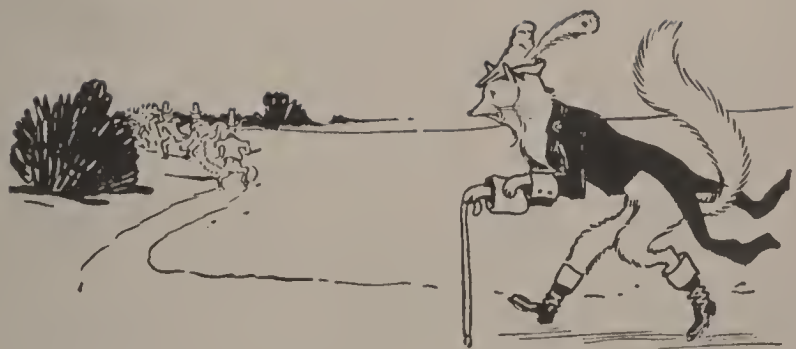






THE FOOLISH FOX







Frontispiece—The Foolish Fox

“ ‘HE IS A DISGRACE TO THE FOXES’ ”

See page 82

ALTEMUS'
WEE BOOKS FOR WEE FOLKS

The Foolish Fox

WITH TWENTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

JOHN REA NEILL

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Altemus'

Illustrated

Wee Books for Wee Folks

Nursery Tales

Nursery Rhymes

The Story of Peter Rabbit

The Foolish Fox

Three Little Pigs

The Robber Kitten

*Daintily, yet durably bound in full Cloth,
and profusely illustrated. 50 cents each*

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By Henry Altemus

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THE FOOLISH FOX

THE FOOLISH FOX

CHAPTER I

THE WOOD WHERE THE SUN SETS

ONCE upon a time there lived in the Land of Fourlegs a gray old Fox who had a large family and a hard heart. He had little enough to eat, and did not wish to share it with his fourteen children, so he turned the whole tribe out of doors, and told them to go and get their own living the best way they could.

Now these fourteen Foxes were sharp set for a good meal of victuals, and, what is more, they did not know where to look for one; but—

“Come along,” said Sharpnose, the youngest of the family; “as we are all thieves, let us go to the Lion—he has most to lose.”

“Very well,” said the twelve, all in a breath; but Redlegs, the eldest, was a fool, so he said nothing.

Off they trudged to find the Lion, and many a mile they had to go; but on they walked, and on and on, all the day long, till they were very tired and dusty, as you

may suppose. They walked on and on, till they reached

The wood where the sun sets,

and there they found the Lion's castle, and the Lion standing at his castle gate. As you must know, the Lion is King in the Land of Fourlegs, and there he stood with his paws behind him, on the look-out for good men and true.

"Hullo!" he grumbled, not over pleased. "You look dusty enough. Pray where have you come from?"

"From the other end of the world, where the gold grows," said

Sharpnose, "and we are all very tired and hungry."

"We are all very tired and hungry," groaned the twelve at once; but Redlegs, he said nothing.

"Are you honest men and true?" said the Lion.

"As true as true," said Sharpnose and his twelve brothers.

"And what are you?" said the Lion of the eldest.

"Oh, I am a thief," said Redlegs.

"Then I must look after you," said the Lion.

So he took the thirteen Foxes in



“THE LION STANDING AT HIS CASTLE GATE”

and gave them a good supper of roast goose; and after that a nice swan's-down bed to lie on.

“But as for you,” said the Lion to Redlegs, when he came out to him after sunset, and found him shivering in the cold, “as for you, whom I have to look after, go off and clean the pigsties directly, that you may not be idle.”

The next morning, before breakfast time, he called on the thirteen Foxes and set them to watch his great money-box, in which he always kept his gold—for the Lion was very rich, you must know, and had a great deal to lose. Now

when, a day or two after, the Lion went in state to see his old friend Bruin the Bear, he took all his servants with him—all except the fourteen Foxes: thirteen he left guarding the gold in his great money-box, and the fourteenth just finishing off the pigsties.

As soon as King Lion with all his servants were fairly out of sight, said Sharpnose:

“I say, let us steal all this gold out of the great money-box, and bury it in the wood in case we should want to travel. King Lion is sure not to suspect us—he thinks we are honest and true.”

So they stole all the Lion's gold (except one bit, which they left for luck at the bottom of the great money-box), and buried it in

The wood where the sun sets.

Back came the Lion with all his servants, and he soon found out that his gold was gone, I can tell you. So he called the fourteen Foxes at once, that he might know who amongst them had stolen it; and when they came he stood them all in a row before him.

“Are you honest and true?” asked the Lion.



“As true as true,” replied Sharpnose.

“As true as true,” said twelve of his brothers.

“And what are you?” asked the Lion of Redlegs.

“Oh, I am a thief,” said he.

“Ah! so you told me before. I

must look after you," growled the Lion in a great rage. "Put him in prison directly, and cut his right ear off."

Well, they put him in prison for ever so long, and cut his right ear off; but Sharpnose and the other twelve were kept to guard the one bit of gold, till such time as the Lion could get some more—which was not very long, as you may suppose.

CHAPTER II

THE TUB WHERE THE RAIN IS KEPT

BUT after a while, when these young Foxes wanted to see the world, they came to the Lion. "King Lion," said they, "pray give us leave to travel: we will be sure to come back again some day."

"If you are sure you will come back again," said the Lion, "you may go; but I wish you would take that brother of yours with you."

They did not mind, so Redlegs was released, and off they went together. Of course, they dug up the Lion's gold, and with it they bought all the nice things they could think of, as soon as they came to the first town on the road. They went to the tailor's and ordered the finest clothes, to the hatter's for the small caps with the longest feathers, and then, to be smartest of the smart, they called on the bootmaker and were measured for the tightest boots ever worn.

They put up at the best inn in the town; they feasted on roast



goose every day, and drank the best of wine ; they slept in the best bed. Yet, withal, they made Red-legs their servant, and starved him into the bargain ; they fed him upon rinds and parings, and odds and ends, and gave him all the dirty work to do.

But one fine morning, the Foxes found that they had spent all their gold.

“Turn out,” said the landlord of their inn; “we’ll have no beggars here.” And out he turned them.

So, without house and home, they began to get hungry again. Where to get a good meal, none of them knew.

“Come along,” said Sharpnose, “let us call on Old Keeper the Dog. He has plenty of sheep—perhaps we may eat some.”

“Yes, we must eat some,” said the twelve; but Redlegs, he said nothing.

Off they tramped to the Dog's house, and a very long way they found it. They walked and walked, and it rained very fast; but they walked and walked all the day long. Wet to the skin, and as tired as could be, they came to

The tub where the rain is kept,

and the Dog's house was there. They found Old Keeper with his crook in his hand, looking very surly, and minding his sheep.

“Hullo,” said he; “and pray, where do you come from?”

“We come from the other end of the world where the Sheep grow,”

said Sharpnose, "and we are tired and hungry."

"Tired and hungry," sighed the twelve; but Redlegs, he said nothing.

"What do you eat?" asked Old Keeper.

"Turnip-tops," said Sharpnose.

"Turnip-tops," said the twelve in a breath.

"And what do you eat?" asked the Dog of the eldest Fox.

"Well, I eat sheep," said Redlegs.

"Oh, indeed!" sneered the Dog. "Then I must look after you."

He took them in, he gave them

all a good supper, and the next morning set Sharpnose and the twelve to mind the sheep, but Redlegs to cook the dinner, lest he should get into mischief.

However, a day or two after, the Dog had to take a flock of sheep to market. Off he went at break of day, so that he might be all in good time, leaving no one at home to see after the place but the fourteen Foxes. Thirteen were minding the sheep, while Redlegs was scouring out the saucepan.

As soon as Old Keeper the Dog was out of sight, said Sharpnose to the twelve :

“ Let us eat up all the sheep, and then go to bed. The Dog will not think it is us, for he knows that we only like turnip-tops.”

So the thirteen Foxes killed all the sheep but one ; and, what is more, they ate up all they had killed.

They picked every bone but one, and that—which was a very lean shank-bone—they threw to poor Redlegs, just to keep him quiet while they went to sleep, and all the thirteen trotted off to bed directly.

But by-and-by night came, and the old Dog returned. When he

looked round, he found them all snoring but Redlegs.

“Where are my sheep?” he cried.

But nobody knew anything about them.

“I will soon find out!” barked the Dog in a great passion. “Come here, you fourteen Foxes. Now, what have you been eating? Tell me at once.”

“We have had nothing but turnip-tops,” said Sharpnose and those other twelve story-tellers, his brothers.

But when Old Keeper the Dog turned round to see what Redlegs had been eating, he cast his eye

on the shank-bone, which Redlegs had never even thought of eating.

“Oh, oh!” barked the Dog. “That is the way my sheep have gone, is it? Here, you other dogs, throw him into the tub where the rain is kept. He has lost one ear, so cut off the other directly!”

Poor Redlegs cried out in a loud voice that he had never touched the sheep, but, as they did not believe him, he might just as well have held his tongue, for they carried him off, and

*They blew him with a south wind,
They blew him with a north wind,*



*They blew him with an east wind,
They blew him with a west wind,
and they blew both his eyes out!*

CHAPTER III

THE MILL WHERE THE SNOW IS GROUND

THEY cut off his other ear at a blow, and then threw him into

The tub where the rain is kept.

It was a great wonder he was not drowned, but somehow, after awhile, he managed to crawl out, all dripping with wet, just in time to meet his thirteen brothers, who were off again to see the world.

“Come along,” said Sharpnose. “Let us go and see Bruin the Bear, he has plenty of good things for those who will work for him.”

So away they went to see Bruin the Bear. He lived at the cold end of Fourlegs, so they had to walk very quickly indeed ; but on they went, until it began to snow ; on and on they marched, getting colder and colder, till, behold ! they came at last to

The mill where the snow is ground.

Of course the door was shut, but Sharpnose soon pulled up the latch, and in they went, one after another,

Redlegs—who was last—not forgetting to shut the door after him.

Inside the mill sat Bruin the Bear.

“Hullo!” grumbled Bruin. “You nipped-up things of Foxes, where do you come from?”

From the other end of the world where the snow melts,” said Sharpnose.

“And we are so cold and hungry,” chattered the thirteen all together; but Redlegs said not a word.

“What can you grind?” said the Bear.

“Everything,” replied Sharp-



“INSIDE THE MILL SAT BRUIN THE BEAR”

nose ; and " Everything," said his twelve brothers.

" And pray, what can you grind?" asked Bruin the Bear of Redlegs.

" Nothing," he answered, for this Fox had never ground anything in all his life, nor, for that matter, had his brothers.

" Oh!" grumbled the Bear, " you are the lazy one, are you? I must look after you."

Then the grizzly old Bear took pity on them, and gave them each some supper, and a bed each to lie down upon. But the next day he set them to work grinding. It was

very hard work, and none of them liked it, but the old fellow kept them all to it, and laughed to himself when he saw how fast his snow was ground.

“I am going out,” said he, “to call on my friend the Lion, so I shall give you plenty to grind while I am away. And as for you,” he growled, turning sharply round to Redlegs, “I shall give you double work.”

So, before he went out, he set them each a task. To each of the thirteen he gave one sack of snow to grind, but to Redlegs he measured out two.

No sooner was the Bear gone than Sharpnose and his brothers left off grinding. They hated hard work, and were at their wits' end to know how to leave their snow unground, nor do I think they would have hit upon any plan if it had not been for the clever Sharpnose; but, said he :

“Let us all go fast asleep while Redlegs grinds all the snow—he is the eldest.”

He was the eldest, and, luckily for them, he was the strongest. So they told him to do all the work, and to it he went. He had not fairly begun to grind his fifteen

sacks before his brothers lay them down, and went off sound asleep. But poor Redlegs ground on all the same, and sack after sack of his snow dropped through the hoppers of the mill, until he had finished thirteen sacks, and then he could not go on any more. He felt so tired that he sat down to rest, and, as he sat down, he fell asleep.

At that moment, Sharpnose and the twelve started up, for they heard the Bear growling at the door, and as they were rubbing the dust out of their eyes in he came.

“I say, you Foxes,” he grum-

bled, "what have you been doing all the day?"

"Grinding," said Sharpnose.

"We have been grinding," echoed the twelve all in a breath.

"Well, and what have you been doing, Master Redlegs?" he asked, turning round to the eldest.

"Sn-r-r-rr!" answered Redlegs, snoring through his nose.

Now, when old Bruin heard this reply, he felt sure that Redlegs had been asleep all day, and when he caught sight of the two underground sacks of snow he was so angry that he growled out:

"Grind him up with the next



“GRIND HIM UP WITH THE NEXT SACK”

sack!" And then, remembering of a sudden that he himself had no tail, he added, "And off with his tail directly!"

CHAPTER IV

THE BELLOWS WHERE THE WIND IS BLOWN

THEY cut his tail off short, and that woke him up, as you may suppose, but after that they shoved him into the hopper with the next sack of snow, and ground he would have been had not one of the stones been rather loose. But that gave him a chance. So he slipped through with many a bruise, and came out hobbling and limping, just as his

brothers had started off to see a little more of the world.

They were all of them in a high glee at having had the best of the Bear, and—

“Come along,” said Sharpnose. “Let us be off and find the Geese. As we are so fond of them, maybe they will be glad to see us.”

The twelve agreed, but, of course, Redlegs said nothing.

Off they went to the Geese. All day long they trotted; the wind blew its hardest, but they only trotted a little faster, for it blew in their faces, it blew down their backs, it blew them sideways, and



then all round ; but on they trotted till night drew in, and then all of a sudden they came upon

*The bellows where the wind is
blown,*

and there they found Goose Green.

If you could have only seen how

old Daddy Gander stared when he first caught sight of the fourteen Foxes, you would never have forgotten it in all the days of your life.

“I say, Fourlegs!” called out Daddy at last in a great fluster, “I say, Fourlegs, where do you come from?”

“From the other end of the world,” replied Sharpnose, “where the wind is buried.”

“Wind is buried,” echoed the twelve in a breath; but Redlegs said not a word.

“What tongue do you speak?” asked the Gander, wishing to try them.

“Goose!” answered thirteen.

“And what do you speak, Four-legs?” inquired Daddy of the eldest.

“I speak Fox,” replied Redlegs.

“Oh! you do, do you? Then we must look after you.” Still, he took them all in, and gave them a good supper, and a nice soft bed each to lie upon.

Now in Goose Green, which is a very large place on the borders of Fourlegs, there were flocks upon flocks of Geese; yet, many as they were, they grew proud of their thirteen Foxes, who spoke such good Goose, while they were not

(silly birds!) at all proud of Red-legs. So he, poor fellow, was set to work on the Green, which he had to sweep twice a day with a long birch-broom.

By-and-by Daddy Gander had to fight his old enemies the Ducks, so he went off in a great hurry.

“Fourlegs,” said he to the thirteen, as he was on the point of leaving, “I’ll make you all commodores, that you may not forget to watch over the Geese I am forced to leave behind.”

“All right,” said Sharpnose; “if we are commodores, we may do as we like, so let us make haste, and



eat up all the Geese before old Daddy comes back again.”

To work they went, and ate up all the Geese—all but one very old one.

But when Daddy Gander had well beaten the Ducks home he came, and behold! not a Goose

was left to greet him except the one very old one.

“Come, come,” said he; “no Fourlegs but a Fox could have eaten so many Geese. Commodores, what do you speak?”

“Goose,” replied the thirteen commodores promptly.

“Well, and what do you speak, sweeper?” he said to Redlegs.

“I speak Fox,” answered he.

“Ah! so you told me before. I ought to have looked after you. Captains and generals, blow him with the bellows that blows the wind!”

CHAPTER V

THE KETTLE WHERE THE MUD IS BOILED

WHEN the Geese had blown him with all the winds they could find handy, they left him lying half dead on the Green. And there he might have lain till to-day, if the sound of his brothers' voices had not brought him round a little. But hearing that they were off again to see some more of the world, he caught hold of the last one's

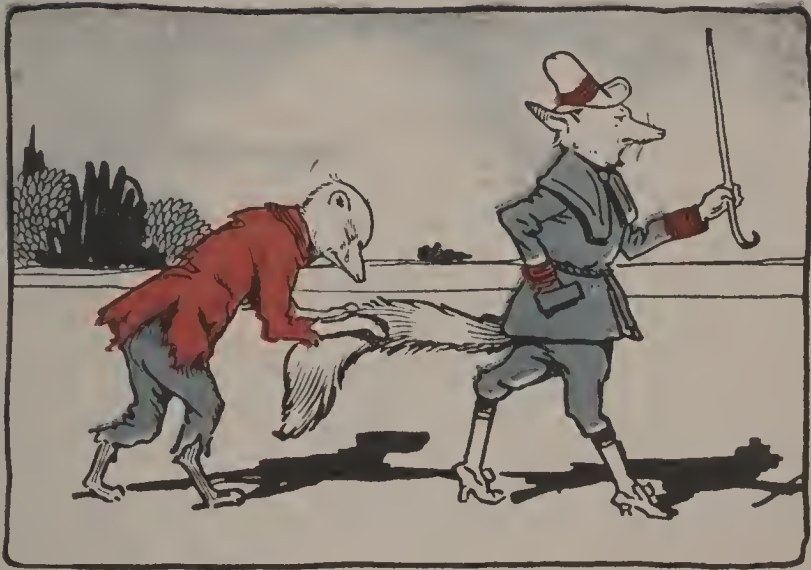
bushy tail, and away he hobbled with them.

“Come along,” cried Sharpnose. “Let us go and catch Graynose the Wolf in a trap, and then we shall have his fine house to live in.”

On they plodded, all the day, in the mud and in the mire. The thicker the mud the harder they plodded on, till at last they found

The kettle where the mud is boiled,

and there by the side stood the Wolf's fine house, and Graynose himself looking out of the window.



“Hallo!” growled the Wolf.
“You have been in the mud.
Where do you come from?”

“From the other end of the world where the Lambs are laid,” replied Sharpnose, and the twelve echoed what he said, as usual; but Redlegs, he said nothing.

“What song can you sing?” asked Graynose the Wolf.

“Ba—a—aa!” sang Sharpnose and the twelve after him.

“Aha! but what do you sing?” the Wolf called out to Redlegs.

“Bow—ow—ow!” barked Redlegs as loudly as he could.

“I see, I see. We must look sharp after you,” said the Wolf; and then, turning to the others, “Wait while I put on my boots, and I will come and hear you.”

You may be pretty sure he went off in a hurry to find his best boots, for if there was one song that the Wolf liked better than another it



“GRAYNOSE LOOKING OUT OF THE WINDOW”

was the cheerful ditty of "Ba-a-aa."

But while he was putting his boots on, what did the thirteen Foxes do but dig a deep pit outside the threshold of the door? So that when Graynose came out in a bustle to hear them sing down he went, head foremost, into the hole, and so they caught him nicely.

Well, after this they had Graynose the Wolf's fine house all to themselves, and lived in it quite merrily. They ate and drank of his best, they laughed at his groans, they sang to him anything but "Ba-a-aa," and, what teased



“ HEAD FOREMOST, INTO THE HOLE ”

him most of all, they wore his shiny boots until they were quite down at heel; but all the Wolf could do was to cry, "Oh, dear! here I am, all alone in this pit, with no one near to help me." Poor fellow! He would have died of hunger if it had not been for Redlegs, who every day brought him all the bones he could spare out of his own plate.

But one fine afternoon, when the sun shone brightly, the thirteen Foxes went out for a walk, and then the cunning Wolf, who had heard them as they passed over the pit, after waiting till they were

out of hearing, called up to Red-legs :

“Old Fox,” cried he, “pray help me up for a minute to stretch my legs. I can easily enough slip down again before your brothers come back.”

“Well, then, jump up,” said the Fox, who thought everyone spoke truth but the Foxes, and up he lifted him.

“Gr-r-r!” growled Graynose, as soon as he found himself at liberty. Gr-r-r—rr!” and flew at poor Redlegs’ throat. “Gr-r-r-ow!” howled he. “You are the fellow that barks, I see. He that barks

may bite. I shall pull all your teeth out."

So he pulled all the poor blind Fox's teeth out, and, after that, not knowing any better use for him, threw him head over heels into

The kettle where the mud is boiled.

And I must tell you it was lucky for the thirteen that the Wolf was so busy, for just then they came in sight; but, finding how matters stood, they never waited to help poor Redlegs, but started off on a run as fast as their legs would carry them.

CHAPTER VI

EYES, EARS, TEETH, AND TAIL

“OH, dear! oh, dear!” groaned this knocked-about Fox, as he scrambled through a small hole in the bottom of the mud kettle. “Whatever shall I do? I have lost my eyes, my ears, my teeth, and my tail. Oh, if I could but find a pair of eyes to see a bit with!”

But as he could not feel any such things were lying about, he thought that he had but one thing left to do, and that was to dig a

deep hole in the ground at once, and cover himself quietly. He found it a hard matter to dig at all, he was so bruised and sore ; but at last, after trying many times in vain, he managed to dig a deep hole. When he had finished it he

Crawled into it.

He crawled and crawled, and crawled right down to the bottom, and whom should he run against there but Digger the Mole ?

“Thank you kindly for your help,” said the Mole. “I was so knocked up with my week’s work that I do not know how I should



have ever dug up to the grass again. What have you lost that you dig down?"

"I have lost my eyes," moaned Redlegs.

"What is the use of eyes?" asked Digger the Mole. "I found a beautiful pair the other day, but

I never use them. You may have them, if you like."

"You are very good," said the poor Fox. "Thank you."

Redlegs soon put his eyes in, and, bidding the tired Mole "Good-night," scrambled up the hole and went on his way merrily.

But after a while, when he came past Duck Lake, what should he see but that fat old dame, Mrs. Duck, catching poor little Jack Frog? The great coward of a Duck soon swam away when she saw the Fox coming, and so left poor little Jack behind.

"Thank you kindly for your

help," croaked the Frog; "you were only just in time. But what have you lost that you walk on dry land?"

"I've lost my tail," cried Red-legs.

"What can be the use of tails?" asked Jack Frog. "I found a beautiful bushy tail only the other day; but do you think that I have ever tried to wear it? I'll give it to you, if you like to have it."

"Thank you," said Redlegs, politely, and he soon stuck his tail on, you may be sure, and, bidding Jack Frog "Good-day," off he went again. Well he walked on till the

sun rose, and then he began to feel very warm, so as he could not find anything better than some fine prickly thistles that grew by the roadside, he used them as a fan, and a very fine one it made him, I assure you.

Suddenly a great noise arose, and, turning a sharp corner, whom should he meet but Ned the Donkey?

“Hee-haw!” shrieked the Donkey. “Oh! what would I give for a thistle!”

“Here are plenty of thistles for you, if that is all you want,” said Redlegs, giving him some.

“Thank you kindly,” said the Donkey, munching them up. “But, I say, what have you lost that you carry thistles about without eating them?”

“I have lost my ears,” groaned the Fox, as he looked at the Donkey’s fine pair.

“What can be the use of ears?” asked the Donkey. “I wish to goodness I had none. Here, I will give you mine with great pleasure, if you like to put them on.”

“You are very good,” said Red-legs in great joy. “Thank you.” And he soon buckled his ears on, as you may very well suppose.

On he went again, till in the afternoon he drew near the Dog's house, and what do you think he came upon then? Why, nothing less than Old Keeper the Dog, worrying Tabby the Cat. No sooner did the Dog set eyes on the Fox's magnificent pair of ears, than they so startled him that he set up the most dismal howl you ever heard, and ran straight away home without stopping,

“Thank you kindly,” said Tabby the Cat, when she had become herself a little, and was able to speak. “What have you lost that you walk along with your mouth open?”



for Redlegs had certainly opened his mouth.

“I have lost my teeth,” he whispered.

“Have you?” Ah! that is a bad job,” returned the Cat, shaking her head. “I found a fine set the other day. They are too large for

me, so I suppose they must be too large for you. You can try them if you like, though."

"Thank you," said the Fox, "I will."

And so it happened that they fitted exactly. So on he went again, restored—eyes, ears, tail, and teeth, singing to himself, and as happy as a prince.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISGRACE TO THE FOXES

GOOD luck had come at once, come almost without asking. He had got his eyes and his ears, his teeth and his long bushy tail ; and he was so proud of his good looks that off he started in search of his thirteen brothers.

“ I wonder where they have got to ? ” said he to himself.

But he did not wonder very long, for just then, as he looked about him, they all came round the corner.

They hardly knew him at first, he looked so well and strong.

“Where are you off to?” he asked.

They told him they were just going back to the Lion, for they had heard that his Wise Counsellor was dead, and that the old King was in a dreadful pucker about it.

“He cannot find anyone wise enough for Prime Minister,” said Sharpnose, “so, as Foxes are the wisest Fourlegs in all the world, we are going to try our luck there again.”

“Then,” continued Redlegs, “I will go with you.”

“ But no ; they would not hear of such a thing.

“ You are the Foolish Fox, you know,” said they, “ and had better stop behind where you are.”

“ No, indeed,” said Redlegs, who had made up his mind. “ Go with you I will ; and, as you will not take me, I shall follow on behind.”

So he followed on behind these clever Foxes till they reached the Lion’s castle, and stood quietly on one side, waiting to hear what the Lion would say. The old Lion, who had been on the look-out for counselors ever since his Prime

Minister died, came out with his hands folded behind him, very glad to see the Foxes back again.

“They may be wise enough for me, after all,” said he; yet he asked the first of the two questions that only wise animals can answer.

“Who are you?” asked the Lion.

“I am the Wise Fox,” replied Sharpnose.

“We are the Wise Foxes,” answered the twelve in a breath.

“And pray who are you?” the Lion asked Redlegs.

“They call me the Foolish Fox,” said he.

“Then I think you will do for me,” chuckled the Old King to himself, for, being so very wise himself, he knew that any Four-legs could call himself clever. “Perhaps he is the wise one, after all.”

But, to make sure, he asked them the second question.

“What have you got?”

“Bags of gold!” cried Sharpnose, who knew how fond the Lion was of his riches.

“Bags of gold!” echoed the twelve, all in a breath.

“And you?” he asked of Red-legs. “Come, what have you got?”

“Nothing,” replied the Fox, in a low voice ; “ I am very poor.”

“You’ll do for me !” roared the Lion, embracing the Fox. “ Red-legs, you are the Wise Fox, after all. “ Here !” he cried. “ Give this good Fox thirteen gold mines, and dress him in the diamond robe of state. Behold my Wise Counselor !”

As everyone will guess, Sharpnose and the twelve were very angry at the good fortune of the Foolish Fox. Said they, wishing to tell a great story for the last :

“ We found Sheep for the Dog, Snow for the Bear, Feathers for



“ ‘ YOU’LL DO FOR ME ’ ”

the Goose, and even then we built a brand-new house for the Wolf, while this foolish fellow, who lost his eyes and his ears, his teeth and his tail, has only got them back again, after all."

"Well, well," said Redlegs, the Wise Counselor, "I do not wish you any harm. I scarcely know what to do with my gold mines. Pray take them off my hands; there will be just one apiece for you."

"And now we are certain of it," whispered the thirteen altogether, as they went off in a huff to their gold mines. "We have

put up with this Counselor Red-legs as long as we possibly could. Now we disown him forever. He is a disgrace to the Foxes.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE KING OF FOURLEGS

AS long as the old Lion lived— and he reached a good age—never once had he cause to regret his choice of a counselor, for, under Redlegs's advice, the Land of Fourlegs grew richer and stronger and happier every year. No one could well say why, but—

The Bear ground more snow than he knew what to do with.

The Wolf built seven fine houses, and bought a hundred pairs of boots.

The Dog bred more Sheep than he cared to sell.

The Donkey found Thistles.

The Cat caught Mice.

The Mole grew fatter and fatter.

Even the Frog kept clear of the terrible Duck, while both Duck and Goose paid no end of tribute to the King. He who was fond of his wealth saw his money-box so full of gold at last, that he had to melt some of it down into bars, and stack it up in the back yard.

Of course these pleasant times could not last forever, and sad to say, one morning, very early, the good old Lion died, but it was not

until he was very, very old indeed, and feeble, and nearly blind.

All Fourlegs mourned for the good old King, who had reigned over them so long, and they buried him in right royal state, before they even thought about getting another ruler.

But after their tears were in some sort dry, they found that a kingdom must have a king, so all Fourlegs set to work choosing a new one, when they found that between their love for the old Lion and their love for themselves they could not make up their minds at all.



"THE GOOD OLD LION DIED"

Day after day they met, but nothing came of that.

Night after night they met, but with no better luck.

All this time when days and nights went on, the great land of Fourlegs was falling into sixes and sevens. The golden stack had gone from out of the back yard. The Bear ground up all his snow, and was taking to animal food. The Wolf had burned down his houses in a rage at having worn out his hundred pairs of boots. The Dog was thinking about eating his own Sheep, and, indeed, there was a terrible to-do. The Mole grew

thin. The Duck gobbled up Jack Frog; the Donkey could not find any thistles. What was to be done for a king?

“For my part,” said Bruin the Bear, “I am not very wise myself, but I shall vote for a Fox.”

“I don’t know,” growled Gray-nose the Wolf. “Foxes are wise enough sometimes, I allow, but they have so many followers, there is no trusting them.”

“Well, - come now,” argued Keeper the Dog; “if that is all, we can soon settle it. Look at Redlegs the Wise Counselor—there is a Fox without a follower

for you : his thirteen brothers have disowned him long ago."

And when they put it to the vote, sure enough, Redlegs was elected. A better monarch they could not have chosen, for if he was wise as a Counselor, he was even wiser as a King. Fourlegs again grew cheerful, and no animals dared to lift their voices against good King Redlegs—none, indeed, but his brothers ; and when they had dug up all the gold out of their mines, and had spent it into the bargain, after they had worn out all their clothes, and been sent to prison for stealing some more, they con-



“ REDLEGS WAS ELECTED ”

soled themselves in all their rags by abusing their royal brother. Said Sharpnose :

“Well, King Redlegs may perhaps have been the Wise Counselor, but he certainly was also the Foolish Fox.

THE END.



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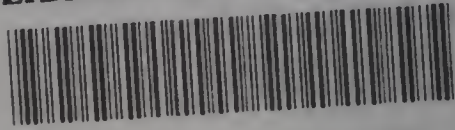
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